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Research Note

NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN FOREST AND RANGE EXPERIMENT STATION

No. 117

Missoula, Montana

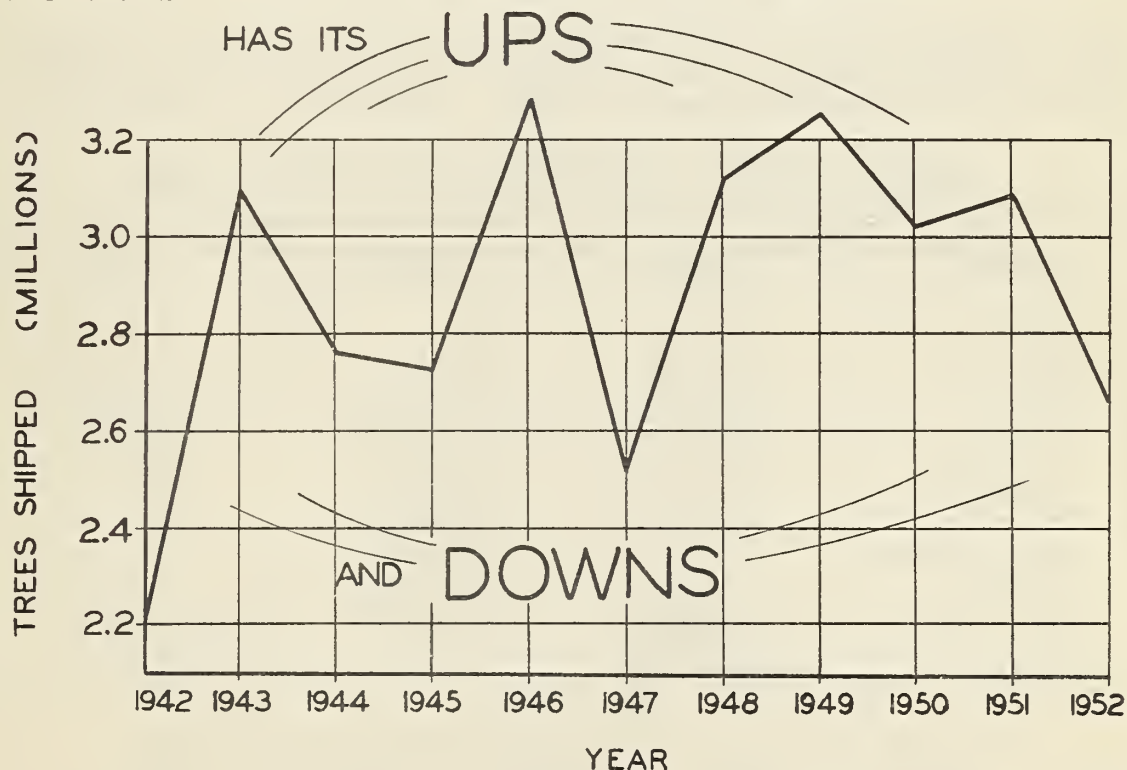
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✕ MONTANA CHRISTMAS TREE SHIPMENTS DOWN IN 1952 ✕

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Montana shipped fewer Christmas trees in 1952 than in any one of the four previous years. The 2,644,600-tree total was 14 percent below the 3,084,540 trees shipped in 1951 and 20 percent below the peak year of 1946. While Christmas tree production in Montana fluctuated widely over the years, shipments for the period 1948 to 1951 were more or less stable. The 1952 drop contrasts sharply with this 4-year trend.

FIGURE 1. MONTANA CHRISTMAS TREE INDUSTRY
HAS ITS UPS



Flathead, Lincoln, Missoula, and Lake Counties provided 90 percent of the trees shipped. Flathead County continues to lead other counties but only 38 percent of this year's shipments originated there as compared to 46 percent in 1951. Missoula, Granite, and Powell were the only important Christmas tree-producing counties that exported more trees in 1952 than in 1951.

Comparison of Christmas trees shipped 1951 to 1952 - Montana

| County | : | 1951 | : | 1952 | : | Change |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------|---|--------------|---|--------------|
| | : | | : | | : | 1951 to 1952 |
| - - - - --Number of trees-- - - - - | | | | | | Percent |
| Flathead | | 1,417,150 | | 1,003,300 | | - 29 |
| Lincoln | | 953,680 | | 843,900 | | - 12 |
| Missoula | | 185,000 | | 382,300 | | +107 |
| Lake | | 285,350 | | 156,900 | | - 45 |
| Granite | | 100,950 | | 106,700 | | + 6 |
| Ravalli | | 83,860 | | 80,800 | | - 4 |
| Sanders | | 55,820 | | 55,600 | | <u>1/</u> |
| Powell | | 2,000 | | 11,800 | | +490 |
| Mineral | | - | | 2,300 | | - |
| Other <u>2/</u> | | <u>730</u> | | <u>1,000</u> | | <u>+ 37</u> |
| Total | | 3,084,540 | | 2,644,600 | | - 14 |

1/ Less than 1 percent. 2/ Includes Beaverhead, Judith Basin, Lewis & Clark and Silver Bow Counties.

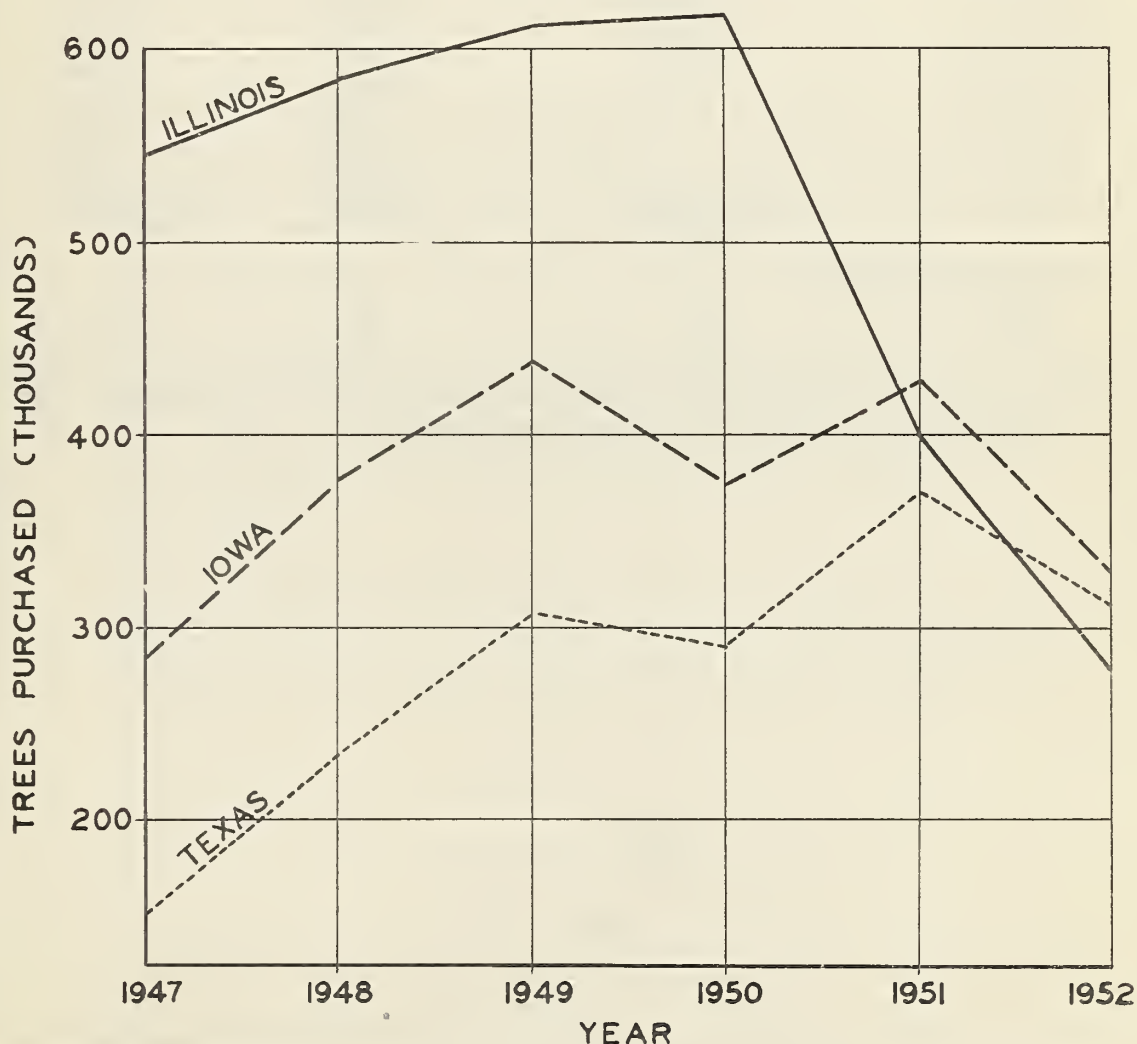
Iowa continues to be the leading importer of Montana trees. This year Texas replaced Illinois in second place. Nine of the 10 top importing states of 1951 took fewer trees in 1952. Indiana was the exception.

Leading ten-state markets for Montana Christmas trees

| 1951 | | : | 1952 | |
|--------------|---------------|---|-----------|---------------|
| State | Trees | : | State | Trees |
| Iowa | 427,500 | | Iowa | 327,750 |
| Illinois | 399,000 | | Texas | 313,500 |
| Texas | 370,500 | | Illinois | 275,500 |
| Kansas | 261,250 | | Missouri | 242,250 |
| Missouri | 251,750 | | Kansas | 204,250 |
| Oklahoma | 247,000 | | Oklahoma | 199,500 |
| Nebraska | 242,250 | | Nebraska | 147,250 |
| South Dakota | 76,000 | | Indiana | 95,000 |
| Indiana | 71,250 | | Louisiana | 90,250 |
| North Dakota | <u>71,250</u> | | Minnesota | <u>71,250</u> |
| Total | 2,417,750 | | | 1,966,500 |

State markets have varied widely from year to year. For example, Illinois took 617,500 Montana Christmas trees in 1950 and only 275,500 in 1952. The following graph shows the fluctuations in the three leading state markets since 1947. These marketing fluctuations along with those in production indicate that the Montana industry is unstable. This instability is perhaps due in part to the lack of quality control in marketing Christmas trees, and partly to the lack of permanently organized Christmas tree harvesting businesses.

FIGURE 2. THREE LEADING STATE MARKETS FOR MONTANA CHRISTMAS TREES REFLECTS INSTABILITY



The drop in exports affected both rail and truck shipments proportionally with each getting the same percentage of the business as in 1951.

Christmas tree shipments by railroad and truck - 1952

| County | : Rail : : shipments <u>1/</u> : | : Truck : : shipments : | : Total : : shipments : |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| - - - - - <u>Number of trees</u> - - - - - | | | |
| Flathead | 926,250 | 77,050 | 1,003,300 |
| Lincoln | 783,800 | 60,100 | 843,900 |
| Missoula | 342,000 | 40,300 | 382,300 |
| Lake | 147,250 | 9,650 | 156,900 |
| Granite | 90,200 | 16,500 | 106,700 |
| Ravalli | 52,250 | 28,550 | 80,800 |
| Sanders | 33,250 | 22,350 | 55,600 |
| Powell | - | 11,800 | 11,800 |
| Mineral | - | 2,300 | 2,300 |
| Other | - | <u>1,000</u> | <u>1,000</u> |
| Total | 2,375,000 | 269,600 | 2,644,600 |
| <u>Percent of total</u> | | | |
| 1952 | 90 | 10 | 100 |
| 1951 | 90 | 10 | 100 |

1/ Data from reports by three railroads: Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific.